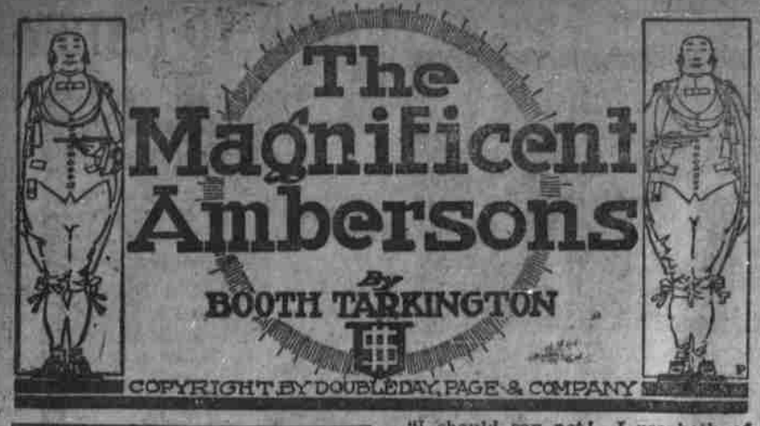

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Major Amberson had made a fortune in 1873 when other people were losing fortunes, and the magnificence of the Ambersons began then. Major Amberson laid out a 200-acre "development," with roads and statuary, and in the centre of a four-acre tract, on Amberson avenue, built for himself the most magnificent mansion the Midland City had ever seen.

CHAPTER II.—When the major's daughter married young Wilber Minafer the neighbors predicted that as Isabel could never really love Wilbur all her love would be bestowed upon the children. There was only one child, however, George Amberson Minafer, but his upbringing and his youthful accomplishments as a mischief maker were quite in keeping with the most pessimistic predictions.

CHAPTER III.—By the time George went away to college he did not attempt to conceal his belief that the Ambersons were about the most important family in the world. At a ball given in his honor when he returned from college, George monopolized Lucy Morgan, a stranger and the prettiest girl present, and got on famously with her until he learned that a "queer looking duck" at whom he had been poking much fun, was the young lady's father. He was Eugene Morgan, a former resident of Bigburg, and he was returning there to erect a factory and to build horseless carriages of his own invention.

CHAPTER IV.—Eugene was an old admirer of Isabel's and they had been engaged when Isabel threw him over because of some youthful indiscretion and married Wilbur Minafer.

CHAPTER V.

Having thus, in a word, revealed his ambition for a career above courts, marts and polling booths, George breathed more deeply than usual, and, turning his face from the lovely companion whom he had just made his confidant, gazed out at the dancers with an expression in which there was both sternness and a contempt for the squalid lives of the unyachted Midlanders before him. However, among them he marked his mother, and his somber grandeur relaxed momentarily; a more genial light came into his eyes.

Isabel was dancing with the queer-looking duck; and it was to be noted that the lively gentleman's gait was more sedate than it had been with Miss Fanny Minafer, but not less dexterous and authoritative. He saw George and the beautiful Lucy on the stairway and nodded to them. George waved his hand vaguely: he had a momentary return of that inexplicable uneasiness and resentment which had troubled him downstairs.

"How lovely your mother is!" Lucy said.

"I think she is," he agreed gently. "She's the gracefulest woman in that ballroom. How wonderfully they dance together!"

"Who?"

"Your mother and—and the queer-looking duck," said Lucy. "I'm going to dance with him pretty soon."

"I don't care—so long as you don't give him one of the numbers that belong to me."

"I'll try to remember," she said, and thoughtfully lifted to her face the bouquet of violets and lilies, a gesture which George noted without approval.

"Look here! Who sent you those flowers you keep makin' such a fuss over?"

"He did."

"Who's 'he?'"

"The queer-looking duck."

George feared no such rival; he laughed loudly. "I s'pose he's some old widower!" he said, the object thus described seeming ignominious enough to a person of eighteen, without additional characterization.

Lucy became serious at once. "Yes, he is a widower," she said. "I ought to have told you before; he's my father."

George stopped laughing abruptly. "Well, that's a horse on me. If I'd known he was your father of course I wouldn't have made fun of him. I'm sorry."

"Nobody could make fun of him," she said quietly.

"Why couldn't they?"

"It wouldn't make him funny: it would only make themselves silly."

Upon this George had a gleam of intelligence. "Well, I'm not going to make myself silly any more, then; I don't want to take chances like that with you. But I thought he was the Sharon girls' uncle. He came with them—"

"Yes," she said; "I'm always late to everything: I wouldn't let them wait for me. We're visiting the Sharons."

"About time I knew that! You forget my being so fresh about your father, will you? Of course he's a distinguished-looking man, in a way."

Lucy was still serious. "'In a way'?" she repeated. "You mean, not in your way, don't you?"

George was perplexed. "How do you mean: not in my way?"

"People often say 'in a way' and 'rather distinguished looking,' or 'rather' so-and-so, or 'rather' anything, to show that they're superior, don't they. It's a kind of snob slang, I think. Of course people don't always say 'rather' or 'in a way' to be superior."

"I should say not! I use both of 'em a great deal myself," said George. "One thing I don't see, though: What's the use of a man being six feet three? Men that size can't handle themselves as well as a man about five feet eleven and a half can."

George was a straightforward soul,

"Are You Engaged to Anybody?"

at least. "See here!" he said. "Are you engaged to anybody?"

"No."

Not wholly mollified, he shrugged his shoulders. "You seem to know a good many people! Do you live in New York?"

"No. We don't live anywhere."

"What do you mean: you don't live anywhere?"

"We've lived all over," she answered. "Papa used to live here in this town, but that was before I was born."

"What do you keep moving around so for? Is he a promoter?"

"No. He's an inventor."

"What's he invented?"

"Just lately," said Lucy, "he's been working on a new kind of horseless carriage."

"Well, I'm sorry for him," George said, in no unkindly spirit. "Those things are never going to amount to anything. People aren't going to spend their lives lying on their backs in the road and letting grease drip in their faces."

"Papa'd be so grateful," she returned, "if he could have your advice."

Instantly George's face became flushed. "I don't know that I've done anything to be insulted for!" he said. "I don't see that what I said was particularly fresh."

"No, indeed!"

"Then what do you—"

She laughed gayly. "I don't! And I don't mind your being such a lofty person at all. I think it's ever so interesting—but papa's a great man!"

"Is he?" George decided to be good-natured. "Well, let us hope so. I hope so, I'm sure."

Looking at him keenly, she saw that the magnificent youth was incredibly sincere in this bit of graciousness. She shook her head in gentle wonder. "I'm just beginning to understand," she said.

"Understand what?"

"What it means to be a real Amberson in this town. Papa told me something about it before we came, but I see he didn't say half enough!"

George superbly took this all for tribute. "Did your father say he knew the family before he left here?"

"Yes. I believe he was particularly a friend of your Uncle George; and he didn't say so, but I imagine he must have known your mother very well, too. He wasn't an inventor then; he was a young lawyer. The town was smaller in those days, and I believe he was quite well known."

"I dare say. I've no doubt the family are all very glad to see him back, especially if they used to have him at the house a good deal, as he told you."

"I don't think he meant to boast of it," she said. "He spoke quite calmly," she retorted, as her partner for the next dance arrived.

She took wing away on the breeze of the waltz, and George, having stared gloomily after her for a few moments, postponed filling an engagement, and strolled round the fluctuating outskirts of the dance to where his uncle, George Amberson, stood smilingly watching, under one of the rose-vine arches at the entrance to the room.

"Hello, young namesake," said the uncle. "Why lingers the laggard heel of the dancer? Haven't you got a partner?"

"She's sitting around waiting for me somewhere," said George. "See here: Who is this fellow Morgan that Aunt Fanny Minafer was dancing with a while ago?"

Amberson laughed. "He's a man with a pretty daughter, Georgie. Me seemed you've been spending the evening noticing something of that sort—or do I err?"

"Never mind! What sort is he?"

"I think we'll have to give him a character, Georgie. He's an old friend; used to practice law here—perhaps he had more debts than cases, but he paid 'em all up before he left town. Your question is purely mercenary, I take it: you want to know his true worth before proceeding further with the daughter. I cannot inform you, though I notice signs of considerable prosperity in that becoming dress of hers. However, you never can tell. It is an age when every sacrifice is made for the young, and how your own poor mother managed to provide those genuine pearl studs for you out of her allowance from father I can't—"

"Oh, dry up!" said the nephew. "I understand this Morgan—"

"Mr. Eugene Morgan," his uncle suggested. "Politeness requires that the young should—"

"I guess the 'young' didn't know much about politeness in your day," George interrupted. "I understand that Mr. Eugene Morgan used to be a great friend of the family. The way he was dancing with Aunt Fanny—"

Amberson laughed. "I'm afraid your Aunt Fanny's heart was stirred by ancient recollections, Georgie."

"You meant she used to be silly about him?"

"She wasn't considered singular," said the uncle. "He was—he was popular. Could you bear a question?"

"What do you mean: could I bear—"

"I only wanted to ask: Do you take this same passionate interest in the parents of every girl you dance with? Perhaps it's a new fashion we old bachelors ought to take up. Is it the thing this year to—"

"Oh, go on!" said George, moving away. "I only wanted to know—" He left the sentence unfinished, and and crossed the room to where a girl sat waiting for his nobility to find time to fulfill his contract with her for this dance.

"Pardon f' keep' wait," he muttered, as she rose brightly to meet him; and she seemed pleased that he came at all. He danced with her perfunctorily, thinking the while of Mr. Eugene Morgan and his daughter. Strangely enough his thoughts dwelt more upon the father than the daughter, though George could not possibly have given a reason—even to himself—for this disturbing preponderance.

By a coincidence, though not an odd one, the thoughts and conversation of Mr. Eugene Morgan at this very time were concerned with George Amberson Minafer, rather casually, it is true. Mr. Morgan had retired to a room set apart for smoking, on the second floor, and had found a grizzled gentleman lounging in solitary possession.

"Gene Morgan!"

"'Gene Morgan!" this person exclaimed, rising with great heartiness. "I don't believe you know me!"

"Yes, I do, Fred Kinney!" Mr. Morgan returned with equal friendliness. "Your real face—the one I used to know—it's just underneath the one you're masquerading in tonight. You ought to have changed it more if you wanted a disguise."

"Twenty years!" said Mr. Kinney. "It makes some difference in faces, but more in behavior!"

"It does so!" his friend agreed with explosive emphasis.

They sat and smoked.

"However," Mr. Morgan remarked presently, "I still dance like an Indian. Don't you?"

"No. I leave that to my boy Fred. He does the dancing for the family."

"I suppose he's upstairs hard at it?"

"No, he's not here." Mr. Kinney glanced toward the open door and lowered his voice. "He wouldn't come. It seems that a couple of years or so ago he had a row with young Georgie Minafer. Fred was president of a literary club they had, and he said this Georgie Minafer got himself elected instead, in an overbearing sort of way. Fred's very bitter about his row with Georgie Minafer. He says he'd rather burn his foot off than set it inside any Amberson house or any place else where young Georgie is."

"Do people like young Minafer generally?"

"I don't know about 'generally.' I guess he gets plenty of toadying; but there's certainly a lot of people that are glad to express their opinions about him."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Too much Amberson, I suppose, for one thing. And for another, his mother just fell down and worshiped him from the day he was born. He thinks he's a little tin god on wheels—and honestly it makes some people weak and sick just to think about him! Yet that high-spirited, intelligent woman, Isabel Amberson, actually sits and worships him! You can hear it in her voice when she speaks to him or speaks of him. You can see it in her eyes when she looks at him. My Lord! What does she see when she looks at him?"

Morgan's odd expression of genial apprehension deepened whimsically. "She sees something that we don't see," he said.

"What does she see?"

"An angel."

Kinney laughed aloud. "Well, if she sees an angel when she looks at Georgie Minafer she's a funnier woman than I thought she was!"

"Perhaps she is," said Morgan. "But that's what she sees."

"My Lord! It's easy to see you've only known him an hour or so. In that time have you looked at Georgie and seen an angel?"

"No. All I saw was a remarkably good-looking fool-boy with the pride of Satan and a set of nice new drawing-room manners that he probably couldn't use more than half an hour at a time without busting."

"Then what—"

"Mothers are right," said Morgan. "Mothers see the angel in us because the angel is there. If it's shown to the mother the son has got an angel to show, hasn't he? When a son cuts somebody's throat the mother only sees it's possible for a misguided angel to act like a devil—and she's entirely right about that!"

Kinney laughed and put his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I remember what a fellow you always were to argue," he said. "You mean Georgie Minafer is as much of an angel as any murderer is, and that Georgie's mother is always right."

"I'm afraid she always has been," Morgan said lightly.

The friendly hand remained upon his shoulder. "She was wrong once, old fellow. At least, so it seemed to me."

"No," said Morgan, a little awkwardly. "No—"

Kinney relieved the slight embarrassment that had come upon both of them: he laughed again. "Wait till you know young Georgie a little better," he said. "Something tells me you're going to change your mind about having an angel to show, if you see anything of him!"

"You mean beauty's in the eye of the beholder, and the angel is all in the eye of the mother. If you were a painter, Fred, you'd paint mothers with angels' eyes holding imps in their laps. Me, I'll stick to the old masters and the cherubs."

Mr. Kinney looked at him musingly. "Somebody's eyes must have been pretty angelic," he said, "if they've been persuading you that Georgie Minafer is a cherub!"

"They are," said Morgan heartily. "They're more angelic than ever." And as a new flourish of music sounded overhead he threw away his cigarette and jumped up briskly. "Good-by; I've got this dance with her."

"With whom?"

"With Isabel!"

The grizzled Mr. Kinney affected to rub his eyes. "It startles me, your jumping up like that to go and dance with Isabel Amberson! Twenty years seem to have passed—but have they? Tell me, have you danced with poor old Fanny, too, this evening?"

"Twice!"

"My Lord!" Kinney groaned half in earnest. "Old times starting all over again! My Lord!"

"Old times?" Morgan laughed gayly from the doorway. "Not a bit! There aren't any old times. When times are gone they're not old; they're dead! There aren't any times but new times!"

And he vanished in such a manner that he seemed already to have begun dancing.

CHAPTER VI.

The appearance of Miss Lucy Morgan the next day, as she sat in George's fast cutter, proved so charming that her escort was stricken to soft words instantly and failed to control a poetic impulse. "You look like—" he said. "Your face looks like—it looks like a snowflake on a lump of coal. I mean a—a snowflake that would be a rose-leaf too!"

"Perhaps you'd better look at the reins," she returned. "We almost upset just then."

George declined to heed this advice. "Because there's too much pink in your cheeks for a snowflake," he continued. "What's that fairy story about snow-white and rose-red—"

"We're going pretty fast, Mr. Minafer!"

"Well, you see, I'm only here for two weeks."

"I mean the sleigh!" she explained. "We're not the only people on the street, you know."

"Oh, they'll keep out of the way."

"That's very patrician charioteering, but it seems to me a horse like this needs guidance. I'm sure he's going almost twenty miles an hour."

"That's nothing," said George; but he consented to look forward again. "He can trot under three minutes, all right." He laughed. "I suppose your father thinks he can build a horseless carriage to go that fast!"

"They go that fast already, sometimes."

"Yes," said George; "they do—for about a hundred feet! Then they give a yell and burn up."

Evidently she decided not to defend her father's faith in horseless carriages, for she laughed and said nothing. The cold air was polka-dotted with snowflakes, and trembled to the loud, continuous jingling of sleigh-bells. Boys and girls, all aglow and panting jets of vapor, darted at the passing sleighs to ride on the runners, or sought to rope their sleds to any vehicle whatever, but the fleetest no more than just touched the flying cutter, though a hundred soggy mittens grasped for it, then reeled and whirled till sometimes the wearers of those daring mittens plunged flat in the snow and lay a-sprawl, reflecting.

But there came panting and chugging up that flat thoroughfare a thing which some day was to spoil all their sleightime merriment—save for the rashest and most disobedient. It was vaguely like a topless surrey, but cumbrous with unwholesome excrescences fore and aft, while underneath were spinning leather belts and something that whirred and howled and seemed to stagger. The ride-stealers made no attempt to fasten their sleds to a contrivance so nonsensical and yet so fearsome. Instead they gave over their sport and concentrated all their energies in their lungs, so that up and down the street the one cry shrilled increasingly: "Git a hoss! Git a hoss! Git a hoss! Mister, why don't you git a hoss?" But the mahout in charge, sitting solitary on the front seat, was unconcerned—he laughed, and now and then ducked a snowball without losing any of his good-nature. It was Mr. Eugene Morgan who exhibited so cheerful a countenance between the forward visor of a deer-stalker cap and the collar of a fuzzy gray ulster. "Git a hoss!" the children shrieked, and gruffer voices joined them, "Git a hoss! Git a hoss! Git a hoss!"

George Minafer was correct thus far; the twelve miles an hour of such a machine would never overtake George's trotter. The cutter was already scurrying between the stone pillars at the entrance to Amberson addition.

"That's my grandfather's," said George, nodding toward the Amberson mansion.

"I ought to know that!" Lucy exclaimed. "We stayed there late enough last night: papa and I were almost the last to go. He and your mother and Miss Fanny Minafer got the musicians to play another waltz when everybody else had gone downstairs and the fiddles were being put away in their cases. Papa danced part of it with Miss Minafer and the rest with your mother. Miss Minafer's your aunt, isn't she?"

"Yes; she lives with us. That's our house just beyond grandfather's." He waved a sealskin gauntlet to indicate the house Major Amberson had built for Isabel as a wedding gift. He frowned as they passed a closed carriage and pair. The body of this comfortable vehicle sagged slightly to one side; the paint was old and seamed with hundreds of minute cracks like little rivers on a black map; the coachman, a fat and elderly darky, seemed to drowse upon the box; but

"There's Your Grandfather Now," Said Lucy.

the open window afforded the occupants of the cutter a glimpse of a tired, fine old face, a silk hat, a pearl tie and an astrachan collar, evidently out to take the air.

"There's your grandfather now," said Lucy. "Isn't it?"

George's frown was not relaxed. "Yes, it is; and he ought to give that rat trap away and sell those old horses. They're a disgrace, all shaggy—not even clipped. I suppose he doesn't notice it—people get awful funny when they get old; they seem to lose their self-respect, sort of."

"He seemed a real Brummell to me," she said.

"Oh, he keeps up about what he wears, well enough, but— Another thing I don't think he ought to allow: a good many people bought big lots and they built houses on 'em; then the price of the land kept getting higher, and they'd sell part of their yards and let the people that bought it build on it to live in, till they haven't hardly any of 'em got big, open yards any more, and it's getting all built up. The way it used to be it was a gentleman's country estate, and that's the way my grandfather ought to keep it. He lets these people take too many liberties: they do anything they want to."

"But how could he stop them?" Lucy asked, surely with reason. "If he sold them the land it's theirs, isn't it?"

George remained serene in the face of this apparently difficult question. "He ought to have all the tradespeople boycott the families that sell part of their yards that way. All he'd have to do would be to tell the tradespeople they wouldn't get any more orders from the family if they didn't do it."

"From 'the family?' What family?"

"Our family," said George, unperturbed. "The Ambersons."

"I see!" she murmured, and evidently she did see something that he did not, for, as she lifted her muff to her face he asked:

"What are you laughing at now?"

"Why?"

"You always seem to have some little secret of your own to get happy over!"

"'Always!'" she exclaimed. "What a big word, when we only met last night!"

"That's another case of it," he said, with obvious sincerity. "One of the reasons I don't like you—much!—is you've got that way of seeming quietly superior to everybody else."

"I!" she cried. "I have?"

"Oh, you think you keep it sort of confidential to yourself, but it's plain enough! I don't believe in that kind of thing. I think the world's like this: there's a few people that their birth and position, and, so on, puts them at the top, and they ought to treat each other entirely as equals." His voice betrayed a little emotion as he added, "I wouldn't speak like this to everybody."

"You mean you're confiding your deepest creed—or code, what ever it is—to me?"

"Go on; make fun of it, then!" George said bitterly. "You do think you're terribly clever! It makes me tired!"

"Well, as you don't like my seeming 'quietly superior,' after this I'll be noisily superior," she returned cheerfully. "We aim to please!"

"I had a notion before I came for you today that we were going to quarrel," he said.

"No, we won't; it takes two!" She laughed and waved her muff toward a new house, not quite completed, standing in a field upon their right. They had passed beyond Amberson addition and were leaving the northern fringes of the town for the open country. "Isn't that a beautiful house!" she exclaimed. "Papa and I call it our Beautiful House."

George was not pleased. "Does it belong to you?"

"Of course not! Papa brought me out here the other day, driving in his machine, and we both loved it. It's so spacious and dignified and plain."

"Yes, it's plain enough!" George grunted.

"Yet it's lovely; the gray-green roof and shutters give just enough color, with the trees, for the long white walls. It seems to be the finest house I've seen in this part of the country."

George was outraged by an enthusiasm so ignorant—not ten minutes ago they had passed the Amberson mansion. "Is that a sample of your taste in architecture?" he asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"Because it strikes me you better go somewhere and study the subject a little!"

Lucy looked puzzled. "What makes you have so much feeling about it? Have I offended you?"

"'Offended' nothing!" George returned brusquely. "Girls usually think they know it all as soon as they've learned to dance and dress and flirt a little. They never know anything about things like architecture, for instance. That house was about as bum a house as any house I ever saw!"

He spoke of it in the past tense, because they had now left it far behind them—a human habit of curious significance. "It was like a house meant for a street in the city. What kind of a house was that for people of any taste to build out here in the country?"

"But papa says it's built that way on purpose. There are a lot of other houses being built in this direction, and papa says the city's coming out this way; and in a year or two that house will be right in town."

"It was a bum house, anyhow," said George crossly. "I don't even know the people that are building it. They say a lot of riffraff come to town every year nowadays and there's other riffraff that have always lived here, and have made a little money, and act as if they owned the place. Uncle Sydney was talking about it yesterday: he says he and some of his friends are organizing a country club, and already some of these riffraff are worming into it—people he never heard of at all! Anyhow I guess it's pretty clear you don't know a great deal about architecture."

She demonstrated the completeness of her amiability by laughing. "I'll

(Continued on Page 7.)

Refuses His Own Medicine.

Reform is always intended for the other man. Never was a reformer who prescribed it for himself.—Columbia (S. C.) State.